



## Senator Feinstein Urges Rumsfeld to Complete Lariam Study

-- *Anti-malarial drug given to service members linked to permanent brain damage* --  
January 21, 2005

**Washington, DC** – Concerned about the health of American service members, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today repeated her request to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to report on the health impacts of the anti-malarial drug known as Lariam used by troops serving in areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Senator Feinstein requested that the Pentagon provide a timeline for the release of its investigation of Lariam in a letter sent to Secretary Rumsfeld. So far, eighteen service members have been diagnosed with permanent brain damage following the use of Lariam.

Following is the text of Senator Feinstein's letter to Secretary Rumsfeld:

January 21, 2005

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

It has come to my attention that eighteen service members have been diagnosed with permanent brainstem and vestibular damage after having been on a regimen of the anti-malarial drug mefloquine (Lariam). This is of great concern to me and I am writing to reiterate my interest in the Department of Defense (DoD)'s investigation of the impact of mefloquine use by service members. I would like to ask you when you expect the investigation to be released.

I believe we should be doing everything we can to protect the health of service members and veterans. In my last letter to you, I expressed my hope that DoD's investigatory panel include experts representing a variety of medical disciplines as well as representatives from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It was also my hope that the information from the seven service members -- now eighteen -- diagnosed with permanent brainstem and vestibular damage from mefloquine toxicity be included in DoD's study. There is much we do not know about the potential risks of the use of mefloquine in service members, but I believe that a scientifically valid and effective investigation of this drug must include input from all of those sources.

I know you share my concern for the health and well-being of our nation's military personnel. I look forward to hearing from you about the timeline for the release of DoD's investigation and I would appreciate it if Dr. William Winkenwerder, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs), who led the investigation, could provide me with a briefing of what DoD found in its investigation.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

cc: Dr. William Winkenwerder, Jr.

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